

Literature Review.

MA Fine Arts

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Student: 526328

Name: James Cleeland

Abstract:

This study investigates whether the commonly used term 'Underground Film' is still relevant to define the movies made by the marginalized other. The term 'Underground' was first used in connection with film artists by the American avant-garde filmmaker Stan VanDerBeek (1927 – 1984). In his manifesto '*The Cinema Delimina: Films from the Underground*', written for *Film Quarterly* (1961), he used the term to describe fellow American filmmakers at that time working under the umbrella of the avant-garde and experimental genres.

Opening up this discussion further, the British Filmmaker, activist and academic Duncan Reekie redefines Underground Cinema as something that fuses elements “of popular culture, Counterculture and Anti-Art.” (Reekie, 2003, p.3). In doing so the term becomes no longer restricted to a niche reserved for filmmakers.

For marginalised groups such as artists, sex-workers, lesbians, queer, gay, cross-dressers, the chronically ill and disabled, Otherness always refers to what is not the norm. It is a place where the anti-identity finds a rhizome, a platform where their ideas can be expressed. A place where *Bartleby* (Melville, 1853) in an act of passive resistance, can say “I prefer not to.”

Works that I will analyse for this study are a series of Clown films that I made in China (2016 – 2019). The films were made without any official permissions and at the risk of being deported. The films feature violence, transvestism, occultism, killing and graffiti. The term 'Underground' I suggest is more applicable to countries such as China and Iran, where there are fewer political and social freedoms, where Internet freedom is restricted, and where non-State sanctioned artists and filmmakers are at a greater risk of imprisonment for their art actions.

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Documentary Film:

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Cleeland, James. 2021. *Interview with the Film Director Yutaka Ikejima*